

# HILLOWAY PARK

# NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2025



In the second week of March, I went for a walk in Hilloway Park. During the winter, it's common to hear the yell of a Blue Jay or the *tsk* of a chickadee, but with spring on the way, I suddenly found myself in the middle of a raucous bird party! In the space of twenty minutes, I heard cardinals, chickadees, Hairy - , Yellow-bellied - , and Pileated Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches, House Finches, goldfinches, Blue Jays, crows, robins, turkeys, Mallards, and Canada Geese. Then, a special treat, I heard the *hoo-hooing* of Tundra Swans flying high above.



What struck me is how much – LIFE – we are surrounded by. And this is just the season's beginning. Few insects, amphibians, or reptiles are awake; most plants are dormant. Peak bird migration occurs mid-May in Minnesota. I encourage you to visit this [website](#) to see how many and which birds are entering Minnesota during spring migration. I also encourage you to get out in our many Minnetonka parks, and watch spring advance – what greens up, what blossoms, who is slithering or hopping or making noise, who is building a nest, raising young. Nature gives us many reasons to celebrate.

## What We've Accomplished

Those of us working on habitat restoration in Hilloway Park have much to celebrate. Over the last three years, this is what we've accomplished:

- The City of Minnetonka Natural Resources Department has used its forestry mower to mow buckthorn and other undesirable plants east and west of the main trail and then spread buckthorn replacement mix.

- Minnesota Native Landscapes mowed the understory in the pine woodland and in the oak-aspen woodland west of the main trail and spread buckthorn replacement mix.
- In late 2024 and early 2025, the City of Minnetonka Forestry Department thinned pines in the pine woodland, removed diseased ash and excess deadwood, and cut and treated invasive black locust trees.
- FoMP volunteers have pulled garlic mustard in the pine woodland, cut and treated buckthorn and ash around the fen, thinned aspen trees, and removed excess deadwood. We spread replacement seed in the aspen stand and around the fen.
- The City installed a “doggy station”.

Below are pictures of the results of the latest work in Hilloway performed by the Minnetonka Forestry Department. If you haven’t walked there recently, I encourage you to do so.



East and west of the main trail at the Hilloway Park entrance. The City Forestry Department removed pines, ash, and deadwood in both areas.



Black locust stumps along Byrnes Road. The stumps were left high so they can be identified for herbicidal treatment.



Black locust logs will be used by a landscaper. Black locust is rot-resistant and makes good fenceposts, benches, etc.



Deadwood removed from the ephemeral wetland.



Southeast corner of Hilloway, previously covered with fallen trees and invasive plants.

## What's Next in 2025

Restoration work in Hilloway Park will be different in 2025 than past years. Most of the seed-bearing buckthorn is gone, so there will be less emphasis on buckthorn removal. We will work to limit the spread of invasive plants so that desirable native plants can establish. Garlic mustard was allowed to grow unchecked in the park for many years as part of a scientific study, so Friends of Minnetonka Parks (FoMP) has asked the City of Minnetonka to help with this plant. On a positive note, garlic mustard aphids have arrived in Hilloway. We will monitor to see how effective they are in controlling garlic mustard.

The table below lists the most invasive plants that have been spotted in Hilloway and appropriate times for pulling them. These times will vary depending on weather conditions. In almost all cases, the best time to pull these plants is WHEN YOU SEE THEM, preferably before they flower, but before they set seed.

**We have two events scheduled this spring:**

**Saturday May 3, 10 AM – 12 PM**

**Saturday, May 31, 10 AM – 12 PM**

**Sign up for these events [here](#).**

Although it's not necessary to sign up ahead of time, doing so allows us to contact you about cancellation, equipment needs, etc.

It is likely we will add other events depending on conditions in the park.

<b>Invasive Plants in Hilloway Park</b>		
<b>Plant</b>	<b>Where this plant has been seen in Hilloway</b>	<b>Time to pull</b>
Garlic mustard	Throughout pine woodland. FoMP has asked City to apply herbicide.	Late April, May
Narrowleaf Bittercress	Pine woodland, look for green flags.	Late April, May
Dame's Rocket (resembles phlox)	Middle of pine woodland	May, June
Garden Valerian	Along trails near fen	Late May, June
Creeping Bellflower	On hill north of fen	Mid to late summer
Queen Anne's Lace	Along main trail	Mid to late summer
Canada Thistle	Northwest corner of fen	Late June, early July
Burdock	Throughout park	Remove seedheads @ July



## Other Ways to Help

Our volunteers are our lifeblood! If you can't donate your time at our scheduled events, there are still many ways you can contribute. To learn more and/ or get started volunteering, see the contact information at the end of this section.

**(Note: all volunteers in the park are required to sign a release form with the City and FoMP).**

- **Park monitor:** Walk the park at least weekly and, depending on your interests, monitor the emergence and location of native and invasive plants, and/or the presence of wildlife. This information (including photographs!) can be used to educate others about nature in the park and help manage invasive plants. These contributions could be featured on our [Facebook page](#), [web page](#), or newsletters.
- **Adopt-a-Spot:** Your role will be like a park monitor, except you will 'adopt' a section of the park (the size and location of your choosing) and commit to managing invasives or communicating to FoMP the need to bring in more resources.
- **Volunteer on your own:** If you aren't ready to adopt a spot but would like to work on habitat restoration, see the contact information at the end of this section.
- **Donate to Friends of Hilloway Park** by clicking [here](#). You can specify that you want your donation to go to Hilloway Park.
- **Are you a photographer or graphic artist?** We would appreciate your help with our newsletter and website.

- Write or call City of Minnetonka staff to thank them for the work that they have done for our parks. Send your thanks and ideas for improvement to your city council representative and one or more of the following people:
  - Leslie Yetka, Natural Resources Manager
  - Matt Kumka, Park and Trail Project Manager
  - Paul Schiller, Natural Resources Technician
  - Josh Obermeyer, City Forester

**To learn more or get started volunteering, contact Sabrina Harvey at [hilowaypark@gmail.com](mailto:hilowaypark@gmail.com) or 952-456-2891. She will help you define an area or project to work on, inform you of best practices for restoration and disposal of plant material, get equipment and supplies, sign required release forms, and show you how to log volunteer hours with the City and FoMP. We look forward to working with you and THANK YOU!**

